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The CIA at Harvard

CPYRGHT

A 'Moral Purity'

Two Central Intelligence Agency analysts are studying this year at the East Asian Research Center (EARC), and their presence has created a boiling controversy on the relationship between the government and the university and on the moral responsibilities of the scholar.

The controversy is revealed in a correspondence of 15 letters this summer among John K. Fairbank, director of the center; Ezra P. Vogel, associate director; David Riesman, Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences; and two EARC graduate students. The five concluding letters of the correspondence, between Fairbank and student Jon Livingston, appear today; the first ten were in yesterday's *Crimson*.

II. Livingston to Vogel: Scholars responsible for "use" of their work.

14 Sumner Road
Cambridge, Mass. 02138
August 16; 1968

Prof. Ezra Vogel
Behavioral Sciences Center
202 Junipero Serra Boulevard
Stanford, California 94305

Dear Prof. Vogel,

I would like to respond directly to two very important questions in your letter--the issue of the scholarly search for "truth" and the broader problem of the complicity of China scholars with the government. Then I will try to explain my personal criticisms of the professional syndrome that has produced such complicity and uncritical acceptance by scholars of near genocide, salvation-by-destruction, etc.

On the first point, I am pleased to see

that you agree with me generally on the political implications of scholarship and on the emotional, controversial nature of vital political problems. Moreover, I agree completely with your emphasis on accuracy and truth. I have gradually come to accept Noam Chomsky's position on this issue; namely, that truth tends, by definition, to be radical and subversive of the existing order. This may in fact be a rationalization on my part, but it seems to be a reasonable stance. Thus, a political line can never justify the distortion of truth—I am still enough of a "scholar" to believe in this much. However, I must also say that I believe over-reliance on "reason" is basically escapist. Reason is simply and only a tool, to be used to further whatever ends one wishes.* It is not an end in itself, in spite of the desire by many to worship such procedures as reason, logic, and pragmatism as cardinal virtues. This view fits neatly into American-style utilitarianism, especially since a "resort to reason" is continually used to justify existing conditions, exhort others to be practical, etc. Frankly, I have no use whatsoever for practicality and reason unless they are subordinated to basic human needs. Otherwise, reason is nothing more than oppression (compare the misuse of this concept with the equally distorted "free" in the mythical "free world").

But to get to the immediate issue: Yes, I do think Asian scholars are complicit, in or to be more exact responsible in some sense for, the government's China policy, even though they "quietly . . . voiced objection to the China policy while continuing to work within the government in an advisory role." It seems to me that there are two main aspects of this: the moral and the practical.

Morally, a scholar is, quite simply, responsible for the ultimate "use" to which his work is put. There is no room for complaints of misuse when the "output" is so painfully evident in the forms of support for Chiang Kai-shek, containment of Communist China, and the application of scholarship in Vietnam, etc.,

etc. Logically, those who have contributed to the making of China policy are obligated to make public their part in that sad misadventure and take the knocks that are assuredly coming. More people than Dean Rusk are due credit for the past decade's debacle—lots of academic China experts had their fingers equally much in the foreign policy pie. How to go about establishing political innocence I really couldn't say. But one thing is clear: most of the top academics in Chinese studies have had a hell of a lot to do with arranging the mess we are now in.

Practically, there is much less ambiguity. The discernible results of your (and others') efforts to influence policy from within the system are virtually zero—more a holding operation than anything else, and hardly a sweeping tide of reform. The Nation of August 19, referring to American support of Franco's Spain, could very easily be pointing at China scholars bent on "subverting" the government:

American spokesmen talk of humanizing the regime from within—which is what people always claim they are doing when they cannot otherwise justify a distasteful alliance, and which in this case does not seem to have been a conspicuously successful instance of foreign infiltration.

In your own terms, and certainly in any measurable sense, liberal-university subversion of government departments and policies has been a total failure. The only apparent "success" is an ever-expanding government collaboration which results in providing legitimacy and support for government policies. So much for "getting results." There is no need for me to preach about moral purity or evangelistic idealism . . . this is plain pragmatism.

One other facet of this situation is what James Thompson convincingly described in his Atlantic article, as the "official government policy" of the most apparent failings of academics when it comes to dealing with